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iJOINED ETCOR
P - ISSN 2984-7567
E - ISSN 2945-3577



The Exigency
P - ISSN 2984-7842
E - ISSN 1908-3181

Career Plateauing in Public Elementary School Teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA)

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Received: 09 March 2025

Revised: 13 April 2025

Accepted: 15 April 2025

Available Online: 17 April 2025

Volume IV (2025), Issue 2, P-ISSN – 2984-7567; E-ISSN - 2945-3577

<https://doi.org/10.63498/nxz2st279>

Abstract

Aim: Career plateauing is a significant concern among employees, particularly those in professions with limited upward mobility. This study examined the extent of career plateauing and the contributing factors among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) schools in the Tboli West District, Schools Division of South Cotabato.

Methodology: This study was a quantitative in approach. Specifically, the descriptive-correlational method is used to provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon and to examine the relationship between the extent of career plateauing among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas.

Results: Findings revealed that the majority of teachers were aged 27-30 (42%) and predominantly female (88%), with most being married (70%). Career plateauing was found to be moderate across dimensions, with position plateau (M = 2.71, SD = 0.97) and contribution plateau (M = 2.75, SD = 0.93) showing similar trends. The overall extent of career plateauing was also moderate (M = 2.73, SD = 0.95). Contributing factors, both individual (M = 2.96, SD = 0.97) and organizational (M = 3.02, SD = 1.00), were similarly rated at a moderate level. Statistical analyses showed significant relationships between career plateauing and demographic factors, with age ($\chi^2 = 45.16, p = .000$), sex ($\chi^2 = 40.97, p = .000$), and civil status ($\chi^2 = 10.88, p = .001$) all playing a role. A moderate, significant correlation ($r = .612, p = .000$) was found between career plateauing and its contributing factors.

Conclusion: From the findings, the study underscores the need for professional development programs and institutional policies to mitigate career stagnation and support teachers' career growth in GIDA schools.

Keywords: Career Plateauing, Geographically Isolated and Disadvantage Areas

INTRODUCTION

Most employees acknowledged the importance of increasing their external employability, as they tended to face limited lateral and upward career movement the longer they remained with an organization. Nevertheless, they often felt at a loss as to how they might change their situation; thus, career plateauing resulted. In the global context, career plateauing is a major concern for seasoned employees, as prolonged tenure in the same position often leads to a lack of job challenges, a normal stage in career development (Lin & Chen, 2021). In many ASEAN countries, rigid hierarchies and limited promotions hinder teachers' career growth, worsened by insufficient professional development. Vietnamese teachers, for instance, report inadequate training, causing stagnation and frustration (Nguyen et al., 2020). The issue is more severe in rural Indonesia and the Philippines, where limited resources, poor infrastructure, and professional isolation further constrain career progression (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2019).

In the Philippine education system, out of 773, 391 taught population, 400, 062 was entry leveled positions or 52 percent was entry-leveled teachers while there are only 53, 259 items, or 6.8% of the total that are occupied by Master Teachers (MT I to MT III) (DepEd Ordered 11, s. 2018). Moreover, these problems in the system of promotion, had kept teachers at the entry levelled or Teacher I position for almost 15 or more years, with many of them retired as Teacher I (UNESCO 2015). Thus, experiencing career advancement stagnation.

Tboli, with its many far-flung schools, is not exempt from career plateauing among public school teachers. A majority of teachers in remote schools remained in their entry positions even after five years of service, indicating



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potential career stagnation. Teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) face unique challenges due to remote locations, limited resources, and difficult working conditions, increasing the risk of career plateauing (Lamb & Fullarton, 2017). Prolonged tenure in the same position often leads to a lack of job challenges and growth, with many teachers retiring at entry-level positions, reflecting significant career stagnation (DepEd, 2018).

Despite the growing body of literature on career plateauing, there remains a significant lack of research specifically focused on public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA). Most existing studies on career plateauing have primarily concentrated on corporate or urban educational settings, often overlooking the unique challenges and experiences of teachers in remote and under-resourced areas (Shakiladevi & Rabiyyathul, 2019). Additionally, the coping strategies employed by teachers in these areas to manage career plateauing remain underexplored.

This study addressed these gaps by investigating the extent and nature of career plateauing among public elementary school teachers in GIDA. It examined both organizational and individual factors and identified the coping strategies teachers used to navigate these challenges. By addressing these gaps, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of career plateauing in GIDA and informed targeted interventions to support teacher motivation and job satisfaction in these settings.

Objectives

This study determined the extent of career plateauing among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged areas in Tboli, South Cotabato. It also explored the factors and coping strategies that could have contributed to the extent of career plateauing.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the teachers in Geographically isolated and Disadvantage Areas in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 gender; and
 - 1.3 civil status?
2. To what extent do career plateauing is prevalent in geographically isolated and disadvantage schools in terms of:
 - 2.1 position plateau; and
 - 2.2 contribution plateau?
3. What is the level of individual and organizational factors that contribute to the extent of career plateauing of teachers?
4. Is there a significant association between the extent of career plateauing and profile variables of public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of individual/organizational factors and career plateauing?

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses in null form are stated as follows:

1. There is no significant association between the profile of public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs) and the extent of career plateauing.
2. There is no significant relationship between the level of individual and organizational factors and the extent of career plateauing.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach, specifically using the descriptive-correlational method. The descriptive-correlation design combined both descriptive and correlational methods to provide a thorough understanding of a phenomenon or relationship. It first described the variables of interest, then examined the correlation between them to determine whether there is a relationship (Neuman, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The respondents for this study consisted of sixty-seven (67) public elementary school teachers in the Tboli West District during the school year 2024–2025. They were chosen because of their actual experience of being in the



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same position 5 years after they are being hired. This approach ensured that the data and insights gathered provided a comprehensive relevance to the scope and phenomenon under investigation.

Instrument

In gathering quantitative data, the researchers employed complete enumeration, given the limited number of participants. Complete enumeration sampling is a method used in surveys and data analysis to examine all possible elements within a finite population. It involved selecting, acquiring, and quantifying data from the entire population to ensure a representative analysis based on specific criteria (Ganapati, 2010).

Data Collection

The researchers followed systematic steps and procedures in gathering data. They secured approval from the Sultan Kudarat State University - Graduate School to conduct the study. Following this approval, a formal letter requesting permission to conduct the study was sent to the Division Office of South Cotabato.

Treatment of Data

This study employed descriptive statistical analysis for quantitative data. Frequency count and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Mean and standard deviation were utilized to determine the extent of career plateauing and the factors contributing to career plateauing.

Moreover, the Chi-square test was used to determine the significant association between the extent of career plateauing and different profile variables. On the other hand, Pearson's r was employed to examine the significant relationship between the extent of career plateauing and the level of factors contributing to career plateauing.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers ensured that all research protocols involving ethics in research were complied with for the protection of all people and institutions involved in the conduct of the study.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the findings from the data gathered for the study. This includes the investigating the extent and factors of career plateauing among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) in Tboli West District.

The Profile of Teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA)

This section presents the demographic profile of the teachers in GIDA school in Tboli West District in terms of age; gender; and civil status.

The age distribution of teachers in the Tboli West District indicates that the highest representation is observed among those aged 27-30 years (42%), while the lowest representation is found in the 39-42 age group (3%). This suggests that the teaching workforce in the district is predominantly composed of younger educators, with fewer mid-to-late career teachers.

The findings is consistent with Bernardo and Mendoza (2021), which revealed that many teachers enter the profession in their mid-to-late 20s, aligning with national hiring patterns and the growing emphasis on early career recruitment. Additionally, a study by Reyes et al. (2020) found that a significant proportion of public-school teachers fall within the 25-35 age range, while older teachers are often underrepresented due to career shifts, promotions to administrative roles, or early retirement.

The gender distribution among teachers in the Tboli West District, indicate that females constitute the majority, with the highest score observed among female teachers (88%). In contrast, male teachers obtained the lowest score (12%). This suggests that females likely represent the dominant or most active gender group among the teacher respondents.

This trend aligns to Acosta and Acosta (2021), who posited that the teaching profession, particularly in elementary education, has historically been female-dominated due to various sociocultural and economic factors. Similarly, a study by David and Albert (2020) reported that women account for a significant majority of teachers in the Philippines, particularly in the basic education sector. This can be attributed to gender norms that associate teaching with caregiving roles, making the profession more attractive and accessible to women (UNESCO, 2022).



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The civil status distribution of teachers in the Tboli West District shows that the majority are married (70%), while a smaller proportion are single (30%). This suggests that most teachers in the district are in stable family relationships, which could have implications for their professional and personal commitments.

This conforms with findings from Santos and Ramirez (2021) who found that married teachers often dominate the teaching profession, as the stability of a teaching career aligns with family life and long-term employment goals. Similarly, a study by Dela Cruz et al. (2020) found that married teachers tend to have longer tenure in the profession, as they seek job security to support their families.

The Extent of Career Plateau among Public Elementary School Teachers

The tables below summarize the extent of career plateau among teachers in GIDA schools in Tboli West District. It encompasses position, and contribution plateau.

Table 1 presents the presents the extent of career plateau among public elementary school teachers in GIDA schools in terms of position plateau.

Table 1. Extent of Career Plateau among Public Elementary School Teachers in GIDA Schools in terms of Position Plateau

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
Job duties remain unchanged over an extended period, leading to a lack of new challenges.	2.91	0.85	moderate
A noticeable decline in enthusiasm and satisfaction with current job responsibilities.	2.91	0.81	moderate
Insufficient recognition or reward for contributions and achievements in the current role.	2.87	1.15	moderate
Higher inclination to seek new job opportunities outside the organization due to perceived lack of growth potential in the current position.	2.75	0.94	moderate
Lack of regular performance evaluations or feedback from supervisors, leading to uncertainty about career progress.	2.73	1.04	moderate
Daily tasks become repetitive and unvaried, causing boredom and disengagement.	2.67	1.02	moderate
There are no visible or realistic chances for upward movement within the organization.	2.64	0.88	moderate
Decreased motivation to excel in current role and lower overall engagement with work.	2.58	1.03	low
Feelings of frustration, resentment, or demotivation regarding career progress.	2.54	0.93	low
Few or no opportunities for professional development or acquiring new skills.	2.52	1.02	low
Section Mean	2.71	0.97	moderate

The findings indicate that the indicators job duties remain unchanged over an extended period, leading to a lack of new challenges (M = 2.91, SD = 0.85, Moderate), and a noticeable decline in enthusiasm and satisfaction with current job responsibilities (M = 2.91, SD = 0.81, Moderate) received the highest mean scores. This suggests that teachers may feel stagnation in their professional roles. When job responsibilities become repetitive, they can lead to disengagement, decreased motivation, and reduced overall job satisfaction.

The standard deviation (SD) values of 0.85 and 0.81 indicate a moderate level of variability in responses, meaning that while most teachers experience these issues to a similar extent, some may perceive them more strongly than others. A moderate SD suggests that not all teachers feel stagnation and loss of enthusiasm at the same intensity, highlighting individual differences in coping mechanisms and perspectives on job monotony.



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Conversely, the lowest-rated indicator, few or no opportunities for professional development or acquiring new skills ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.02$, Low), suggests that while professional development opportunities may be limited, they are not perceived as the most critical concern. The higher standard deviation (1.02) for this indicator suggests greater variability in responses, meaning that some teachers may feel significantly deprived of professional development opportunities, while others may not find it as much of a pressing issue.

Overall, the results suggest that position plateau among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) is at a moderate level ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.97$). The higher standard deviation (0.97) for the overall score indicates a relatively diverse range of experiences among teachers. While some may feel moderate stagnation, others may experience it at lower or higher levels. This suggests that career stagnation, recognition, and engagement concerns are not uniformly felt by all teachers but remain significant enough to warrant intervention.

The findings conform to Ryan and Deci (2020) suggesting that a lack of variety and challenge in one's job can significantly impact motivation and professional commitment. Relatively, studies have shown that continuous learning opportunities are crucial in preventing career stagnation and enhancing professional growth (OECD, 2019). Teachers who lack access to meaningful professional development may struggle to improve instructional practices and remain engaged in their work.

Table 2 the presents the extent of career plateau among public elementary school teachers in GIDA schools in terms of contribution plateau.

Table 2. Extent Of Career Plateau Among Public Elementary School Teachers In Gida Schools In Terms Of Contribution Plateau

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1. Underutilization of the employee's skills and expertise, leading to a sense of wasted potential.	2.94	1.07	moderate
2. Absence of opportunities to grow professionally within the organization, leading to a sense of contribution stagnation.	2.87	0.95	moderate
3. Predominantly handling routine and administrative tasks, with fewer opportunities for impactful or strategic work.	2.84	0.79	moderate
4. Reduce frequency of proposing new ideas or solutions, indicating a lack of creative engagement.	2.76	0.87	moderate
5. Lower inclination to take on new projects or responsibilities beyond the basic job requirements.	2.73	0.85	moderate
6. Receiving minimal feedback on work contributions, suggesting a lack of attention to the employee's input.	2.73	0.93	moderate
7. Consistent performance levels with no significant improvements or achievements over time.	2.72	0.85	moderate
8. Feeling disengaged from the organization's mission, goals, and overall progress, reflecting a disconnect between the employee's contributions and the organization's direction.	2.69	0.96	moderate
9. Less involvement in addressing and resolving workplace challenges or issues.	2.66	1.08	moderate
10. Perception that one's opinions or suggestions are no longer valued or considered by colleagues and superiors.	2.55	0.91	low
Section Mean	2.75	0.93	moderate



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The findings indicate that the highest-rated indicator for career plateau in terms of contribution plateau is underutilization of the employee's skills and expertise, leading to a sense of wasted potential ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.07$, Moderate). This suggests that many teachers feel that their abilities and knowledge are not being fully utilized in their roles, which can contribute to frustration and decreased motivation. The relatively high standard deviation ($SD = 1.07$) indicates a greater variability in responses, meaning that while some teachers strongly feel underutilized, others may not perceive it as a significant issue. This variation may be influenced by differences in job assignments, administrative support, or opportunities for professional growth.

Conversely, the lowest-rated indicator is perception that one's opinions or suggestions are no longer valued or considered by colleagues and superiors ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.90$, Low). This suggests that, in general, teachers do not feel completely disregarded in decision-making processes, although some still experience this concern. The moderate $SD (0.90)$ indicates that while perceptions vary, the responses are relatively more consistent compared to the highest-rated indicator. This implies that most teachers still feel at least somewhat acknowledged by their colleagues and superiors, even if improvements in participatory decision-making could still be made.

Overall, the extent of career plateau in terms of contribution plateau among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) schools is at a moderate level ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.93$). The moderate $SD (0.93)$ suggests that while career stagnation in terms of contribution is a concern for many teachers, there are notable differences in how strongly this is felt. Some teachers may feel that they are still able to contribute meaningfully, while others experience significant limitations in utilizing their skills and expertise.

Table 3 presents the summary of the extent of career plateau among public elementary school teachers in GIDA schools of Tboli West District

Table 3. Summary of the Extent of Career Plateau among Public Elementary School Teachers in GIDA Schools of Tboli West District

Extent of Career Plateau	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Contribution Plateau	2.75	0.93	Moderate	somewhat agrees that they are experiencing a contribution plateau but may not feel entirely stuck.
Position Plateau	2.71	0.97	moderate	somewhat agrees that they are experiencing a position plateau but may not feel entirely stuck.
Section Mean	2.73	0.95	moderate	somewhat agrees that they are experiencing a career plateau but may not feel entirely stuck.

The findings suggest that contribution plateau among public elementary school teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) schools in the Tboli West District received the highest mean score ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.93$), which is described as moderate. This indicates that teachers generally perceive a moderate degree of stagnation in terms of their ability to make meaningful contributions in their roles. While they may still feel engaged in their work, there may be a sense that their potential is not being fully realized or utilized. The moderate standard deviation ($SD = 0.93$) suggests a relatively varied range of responses, meaning some teachers feel more strongly than others about their underutilization. This variability could be due to differences in job assignments, professional experiences, or the availability of opportunities to take on leadership roles or develop new skills.

On the other hand, position plateau received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.97$), though it is still described as moderate. This indicates that teachers may feel some degree of stagnation in their career advancement opportunities, but it is not perceived as overwhelmingly problematic. The higher standard deviation ($SD = 0.97$) for this indicator suggests that there is greater variability in teachers' perceptions of career progression. Some teachers may feel trapped in their current positions, while others may not feel as strongly about the lack of upward mobility. The differences in responses could stem from factors such as years of experience, administrative support, or the availability of career advancement programs.

Overall, the extent of career plateau among teachers in the Tboli West District is described as moderate ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.95$). The moderate mean score suggests that while career stagnation is an issue, it is not seen as severe. The standard deviation ($SD = 0.95$) further emphasizes that there is a moderate level of variation in how



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teachers experience career plateau, with some feeling more affected than others. Despite this, the overall moderate description indicates that career plateau is a relevant concern that could affect teacher motivation and retention. These findings conform Garcia and Weiss (2021) emphasized that teachers in remote or disadvantaged areas, such as Tboli West District, may face additional career barriers.

The Level of Contributing Factors to Career Plateau Among Public Elementary School Teachers

This section presents the results of the level Contributing Factors to Career Plateau Among Public Elementary School Teachers. It encompasses individual, and organizational factors.

Table 4 presents the level individual contributing factors to career plateau among public elementary school teachers.

Table 4. Level of Individual Factors Contributing to Career Plateau

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
Financial Constraints (Limited professional development due to financial limitations)	3.39	0.90	moderate
Burnout and Stress (Chronic stress or burnout affecting career growth)	3.22	1.03	moderate
Work-Life Balance (Personal commitments and concerns over work-life balance)	3.16	0.93	moderate
Skill-Related Factors (Outdated skills, lack of continuous learning, and limited adaptability)	3.04	0.99	moderate
Self-Efficacy Factors (Low self-confidence and fear of failure)	3.00	0.97	moderate
Perception of Career Opportunities (Limited career vision and belief in lack of advancement opportunities.)	2.91	0.98	moderate
Networking and Mentorship (Limited professional network and absence of mentorship)	2.82	1.00	moderate
Engagement and Initiative (Low engagement, lack of initiative, and contentment with current status)	2.76	0.97	moderate
Job Fit and Satisfaction (Poor job fit, job monotony, or overqualification)	2.67	0.82	moderate
Motivational Factors (Including lack of ambition, complacency, and fear of failure)	2.66	1.07	moderate
Section Mean	2.96	0.97	moderate

The findings indicate that among the individual factors contributing to career plateau, financial constraints (Limited professional development due to financial limitations) received the highest mean score ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.90$), which is verbally described as moderate. This suggests that financial barriers are a significant concern for teachers in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), as they may hinder access to further training, certifications, and career advancement opportunities. The moderate standard deviation ($SD = 0.90$) suggests a moderate variation in responses, meaning that while financial constraints are a widespread issue, some teachers may feel its impact more strongly than others. This disparity could be influenced by differences in salary, household responsibilities, and access to financial support for professional development.

On the other hand, motivational factors (Including lack of ambition, complacency, and fear of failure) received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.07$), though it is still verbally described as moderate. This suggests that while motivation-related issues contribute to career plateau, they are not as pressing as financial constraints. The higher standard deviation ($SD = 1.07$) indicates greater variability in how teachers perceive motivational barriers. Some teachers may struggle with personal drive and self-efficacy, while others remain highly ambitious despite external challenges. This variability highlights the need for individualized support systems, such as mentorship programs and career coaching, to address personal motivation concerns.



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Overall, the level of individual factors contributing to career plateau is moderate ($M = 2.96, SD = 0.97$). The moderate mean score suggests that individual challenges; such as financial constraints and motivation are not extreme but are significant enough to affect teachers' career progression. The standard deviation (0.97) further suggests that perceptions of career plateau vary among teachers, indicating that some face more substantial barriers than others.

The findings conform to Shrestha, (2021) whose studies have shown that financial constraints are a major barrier to professional growth, particularly in low-resource settings, as teachers struggle to afford further education, certifications, and training opportunities. Relatively, financial limitations can also affect motivation and job satisfaction, leading to reduced engagement and increased career stagnation (Garcia & Weiss, 2020).

Table 5 presents the level of organizational contributing factors to career plateau among public elementary school teachers.

Table 5. The Level of Organizational Contributing Factors to Career Plateau among Public Elementary School Teachers

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
Limited Promotion Opportunities (Flat structures, lack of upward mobility, or seniority-based promotions)	3.22	0.97	moderate
Economic Constraints (Budget cuts, lack of resources, and financial constraints.)	3.22	0.98	moderate
Geographical Constraints (Limited opportunities based on location or mobility requirements.)	3.22	1.15	moderate
Recognition and Reward Issues (Insufficient recognition and inadequate compensation)	3.04	0.96	moderate
Policy Constraints (Rigid promotion policies, limited internal hiring, and inflexible job structures.)	2.97	0.95	moderate
Communication Problems (Poor career path transparency, unclear promotion criteria, and lack of feedback)	2.94	0.94	moderate
Organizational Culture (Risk aversion, favoritism, and resistance to change)	2.93	1.00	moderate
Lack of Development Programs (Insufficient training, mentorship, or leadership development opportunities)	2.91	1.03	moderate
Job Design Issues (Narrow job roles, lack of job rotation, or monotonous tasks)	2.88	0.90	moderate
Leadership Issues (Ineffective leadership, micromanagement, and lack of delegation.)	2.88	1.14	moderate
Section Mean	3.02	1.00	moderate

The findings indicate that among the organizational factors contributing to career plateau, the highest-rated indicators are limited promotion opportunities (flat structures, lack of upward mobility, or seniority-based promotions) ($m = 3.22, sd = 0.97$); economic constraints (budget cuts, lack of resources, and financial constraints) ($m = 3.22, sd = 0.98$); and geographical constraints (limited opportunities based on location or mobility requirement) ($m = 3.22, sd = 1.15$). All three indicators received the same mean score and are verbally described as moderate. This suggests that career stagnation among teachers is strongly influenced by structural and systemic barriers rather than personal limitations. The moderate standard deviations (ranging from 0.97 to 1.15) indicate some variability in teachers' experiences, with geographical constraints showing the highest variability ($SD = 1.15$), suggesting that while some teachers are significantly affected by location-based limitations, others may have found ways to navigate these challenges.

On the other hand, leadership issues (ineffective leadership, micromanagement, and lack of delegation) received the lowest mean score ($m = 2.88, SD = 1.14$), though it is still verbally described as moderate, this suggests that while leadership-related concerns exist, they are not perceived as the most pressing challenge compared to limited career growth, financial constraints, and geographic mobility restrictions. The relatively high standard deviation ($SD = 1.14$) for this indicator indicates a wider spread of responses, meaning that some teachers may perceive leadership issues as a significant challenge, while others may not experience them as intensely.



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Overall, the level of organizational factors contributing to career plateau among public elementary school teachers is described as moderate ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.00$). This suggests that while teachers do not experience extreme dissatisfaction due to organizational constraints, there are notable concerns that could impact motivation, career progression, and long-term retention. The moderate standard deviation ($SD = 1.00$) indicates a fair level of variation in experiences, meaning that while some teachers feel significantly constrained by organizational barriers, others may have found ways to adapt.

The findings conform to existing studies on career plateau and teacher retention. Benson and Brown (2020) highlight that limited promotion opportunities due to rigid structures, tenure-based advancement, and lack of clear career pathways can significantly impact job satisfaction and retention. Structural stagnation within schools prevents teachers from progressing professionally, leading to disengagement and potential turnover.

The findings indicate that among the contributing factors to career plateau, organizational factors received the highest mean score ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.00$), while individual factors received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.97$), though both are verbally described as moderate. This suggests that career plateau among teachers is influenced more by institutional and structural barriers rather than personal limitations.

The moderate standard deviation ($SD = 1.00$ for organizational factors and $SD = 0.97$ for individual factors) indicates that while some teachers experience significant career stagnation due to these factors, others may feel less affected. The slightly higher variability in organizational factors suggests that institutional constraints, such as promotion limitations, financial constraints, and leadership issues, impact teachers to different extents depending on their specific work environment.

Overall, the level of contributing factors to career plateau is described as moderate ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.97$). This suggests that while teachers do not experience extreme stagnation or dissatisfaction, they face notable challenges that may hinder career growth and long-term motivation. The moderate mean score implies that career plateau is a significant but not severe concern, warranting interventions to prevent further decline in motivation and job satisfaction.

The findings align with existing research on career plateau and teacher retention. Studies suggest that organizational factors, including lack of career mobility, financial constraints, and geographic limitations, play a crucial role in career stagnation (Benson & Brown, 2020). Schools with rigid promotion structures and inadequate professional development opportunities often see higher rates of teacher disengagement and reduced job satisfaction (Garcia & Weiss, 2021).

Moreover, individual factors such as motivation and ambition are secondary to structural barriers in determining career plateau. Research by Kim and Kao (2019) found that teachers' career advancement is often limited more by institutional constraints than by personal ambition or skill level. This supports the study's findings, where organizational barriers were perceived as a greater concern than individual limitations.

Testing the Significant Association Between the Extent of Career Plateauing and Profile Variables of Public Elementary School Teachers In Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas

The table below presents the results of Chi square analysis between the extent of career plateauing and profile variables of public elementary school teachers in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

The results of the chi-square test revealed age and career plateauing (45.16, $P=.000$) sex and career plateauing (40.97, $p=.000$); and civil status and career plateauing (10.88, $p=.001$) indicates that age, sex, and civil status are significantly associated with career plateauing. This suggests that as teachers progress in age, their experience of career stagnation may vary. The mean age of 32.32 years suggests that career plateauing may be more pronounced during early to mid-career stages.

Relatively, the mean score suggests that career plateauing is more pronounced among female teachers, as the majority of respondents were female. Conversely, the findings suggest that married and single teachers experience career stagnation differently. Married teachers may face additional responsibilities that could impact their career mobility, while single teachers may have greater flexibility for professional development and career advancement.

This finding aligns with Kim and Kao (2019) that suggest mid-career teachers often experience career stagnation, as opportunities for advancement become more limited over time. Additionally, younger teachers may experience higher motivation and enthusiasm, while older teachers may face barriers related to professional mobility and administrative structures (Garcia & Weiss, 2021).

Moreover, it conforms to Benson and Brown (2020), which suggest that women in teaching may experience career stagnation due to systemic barriers, fewer leadership opportunities, and competing personal responsibilities.



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Addressing this issue may require gender-sensitive career development programs, leadership training for women, and policies that support work-life balance. The findings also conform with research by Shrestha (2022), which suggests that family responsibilities, economic constraints, and work-life balance challenges can influence career progression.

Testing the Relationship between the Extent of Career Plateau and Level of Contributing Factors

The correlation analysis between the extent of career plateau and level of contributing factors reveals a moderate, significant positive correlation ($r = .612, p = .000$). The correlation coefficient suggests that as the level of contributing factors increases, career plateauing also increases among teachers. The p-value (.000) confirms that this correlation is statistically significant, meaning the relationship is unlikely due to chance.

These findings are consistent with Benson and Brown (2020) emphasize that limited career growth opportunities, ineffective leadership, and financial constraints significantly contribute to workplace dissatisfaction and career plateauing. Also, Garcia and Weiss (2021) further support the idea that teachers facing restricted promotion pathways and professional growth challenges are more likely to experience career stagnation, affecting their motivation and long-term engagement.

Conclusions

The study highlights the presence of career plateauing among public elementary school teachers, influenced by demographic characteristics and workplace factors. The findings suggest that career plateauing is experienced at a moderate level, indicating that while teachers do not face extreme dissatisfaction, there are concerns regarding professional growth and engagement.

Demographic factors such as age, gender, and civil status play a significant role in how teachers experience career plateauing. Younger teachers appear to be more represented in the profession, while women make up the majority of the teaching workforce. Marital status also emerges as a factor, potentially influencing career stability and progression.

Both individual and organizational factors contribute to career plateauing, with financial limitations, limited promotion opportunities, and leadership challenges affecting teachers' professional development. Statistical analyses further revealed the relationship between career plateauing and individual, and organizational factors, emphasizing the importance of addressing both personal and institutional challenges. The findings underscore the need for policies and initiatives that promote career growth, provide professional development opportunities, and create a more supportive working environment for teachers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the facts and conclusions drawn from this study:

1. Department of Education may develop and implement structured career advancement programs that provide clear pathways for promotion, ensuring that teachers have opportunities for professional growth and skill enhancement to reduce career stagnation.
2. School administrators may actively provide mentorship, leadership training, and continuous professional development activities to help teachers stay engaged and motivated in their careers, addressing both individual and organizational factors that contribute to career plateauing.
3. Teachers may take proactive steps in their professional development by seeking additional training, pursuing graduate studies, and engaging in self-directed learning to enhance their competencies and open more opportunities for career growth.
4. Researchers may explore innovative strategies and interventions that can help mitigate career plateauing among teachers, focusing on factors such as job redesign, motivation strategies, and teacher retention programs to provide evidence-based recommendations.
5. Future researchers may conduct longitudinal studies to track career plateauing trends over time and examine the effectiveness of existing career development initiatives in addressing career stagnation among teachers, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA).

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P - ISSN 2984-7842
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